

March 4, 2014

Housing Committee - Public Hearing on Raised Bill No. 365

AN ACT CONCERNING WAITING LISTS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING.

Written Testimony of Scott C. Bertrand

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Housing Committee –

I have been a public housing practitioner for over 18 years. My experience includes being a Past President of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials more commonly known as CONN-NAHRO. I am currently the Executive Director of the Enfield Housing Authority.

I fully support Raised Bill No. 365 which will allow waitlists to be maintained by date and time after an initial random lottery process for the first thirty days after the housing becomes available. It will also allow for income tiering. This Bill supports Governor Malloy's reinvestment initiative for State Sponsored Housing. The date and time method is currently used for federal housing waiting lists.

The changes will help to minimize rent increases to the current residents as the shift will occur over time. The increased revenue will help to keep the developments on a sustainable path well into the future. This legislation will also greatly contribute to local agency's operational efficiency by containing unnecessary costs associated with the currently approved waitlist methods.

The present regulations are clearly written for initial lease up and not for ongoing operations. This results in agencies awkwardly trying to fit ongoing operations into the regulations resulting in an inefficient operation. It provides for limited to no opportunity for a property to develop a sustainable revenue stream.

Using the random lottery method for ongoing waitlist management is problematic. The current requirements for the random lottery method requires a property to close its waiting list to be able to conduct a lottery, then notify the department 90 days in advance of its intent to advertise the reopening of the waiting list. The property then needs to advertise the opening of the waiting list and reopen it for at least 90 days. This random lottery process is cumbersome, time intensive and expensive, as small and medium PHAs often need to supplement staffing.

The delays related to administering the process on an ongoing basis could lead to vacancy loss if sufficient applicants do not remain on the waiting list between lottery selections. One positive use of a random lottery method is for accepting applications after a waiting list has been closed. Allowing a random lottery to occur for applications received within a predetermined time frame, such as the first 30 days, allows equal access to a waiting list that is just opening and provides better service to applicants by

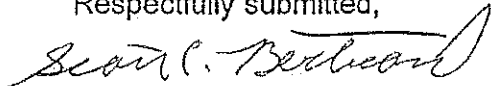
preventing waits in long lines. Subsequent to the lottery period, placement on the waiting list should revert to date and time if the waiting list is to remain open. The pointing system is also problematic. The point system also leads to only the lowest income households being housed since they tend to achieve the highest number of points and potential and could lead to concentrations of low income households. The process for documenting the claimed points is difficult and provides an incentive for applicants to provide misinformation in order to gain additional points.

The existing requirements have contributed to the current model greatly drifting from the original intent that these programs be self-sufficient. The unintended consequence has been that the programs serve poorest of the poor leaving the local public housing authority little to no opportunity to build capital reserves and achieve long-term sustainability without continued government subsidies.

Allowing for a mix of incomes within the property will create and allowing for a prescribed revenue stream. This income tiering can be achieved while serving a percentage of the lowest income households along with a balance from other income categories. This flexibility would enhance the properties', in the state financed housing portfolio, ability to be independently sustainable.

The need to preserve The State Sponsored Housing is very real. I encourage you to support Raised Bill No. 365.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Scott C. Bertrand".

Scott C. Bertrand